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ABSTRACT

In the Netherlands, the immediate support and coaching of primary schools and kindergartens is institutionalized in a nationwide network of local and regional school support agencies. This research study sought information about the role and characteristics of external consultants and their relationship to the school. Explorative case studies were conducted in eight schools, using interviews, questionnaires, observation, and free data gathering. The theoretical framework for school innovation support by consultants is described, and the activities of consultants and school personnel are discussed. Descriptions are given of the characteristics of the schools, the innovation activities undertaken, and the characteristics of the consultant and his relationship to the school. An analysis is presented of the findings on the following research questions: (1) How do consultants plan their actions along all the relevant action dimensions?; (2) What activities are done by consultants to support the school and the innovation process? Can clusters of activities be distinguished?; (3) What activities are done by consultants to support their relationship with a school? Can clusters of activities be distinguished?; (4) Is it possible to identify mutually different groups of consultants?; and (5) What variables within the school innovation support situation can be identified as probable factors causing differences in support activities? (JD)

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A case study research of the support actions and activities of external school consultants to New Basic School innovative schools

(School Support Study)

by

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2. *The research goal, questions, design, techniques and output*

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. *The research context*

The researchproject reported in this paper is being executed within the Department for Educational Studies and Research of the State University of Utrecht. 'Innovation and Support' is one emphasis of the four in this department's teaching and research task.
This research was made possible by a grant from the Foundation for Educational Research (SVO), under the title Practice and/or Policy Supporting Research; in this case practice and policy in primary education, in particular the nationwide innovation 'New Basic School', including the fusion and integration of primary school and kindergarten.

The focus of this research in this area was:
the external support given to schools, in a more or less sytematic way 'in innovation' towards a New Basic School.

1.2. *The research situation*

In the Netherlands the immediate support and coaching of primary schools and kindergartens is institutionalized in a nationwide network of (about 65) local and regional school support agencies. They give support to individual pupils, to the teachers, to the school environment and to the school as an educational organization or system. Within the latter they are mostly involved in - partly self-initiated - developments and innovations in schools.
From the very beginning of the systematic development of a New Basic School the policy has been promoted, that the external support of NBS innovations should be provided by consultants from the regular support agencies.

The research was motivated by three facts:
- the innovation process in a school is influenced by the external support given to that school
- very little is systematically known about the what and how of school support by external consultants
- local and regional school support in our country is both a standard and an expensive part of the educational system, especially in primary education and kindergarten.

With these reasons in mind, the research was focused on
the school consultancy situation within the development of New Basic School.
It was, and it still is, the first comprehensive research study of the Dutch external school support system.

1.3. *The researchers*

The research was done in the last three years by an team of five researchers and three student assistants. The author of this paper participated in the research as staff member of the department; the others participated on a project basis.

2. THE RESEARCH GOAL, QUESTIONS, DESIGN, TECHNIQUES AND OUTPUT

2.1. *The research goal*

The research intends to acquire knowledge about the external support and the creation of conditions for it in school innovation situations,

a. for use of school consultants in innovation support situations, and
b. to make a well-founded contribution to the development of a 'practice theory' of support and the creation of the conditions for it.

The term *'practice theory'* is defined by Dutch scholars (Marx, Knip) as " a system of logically connected, expressly non-contradictory assertions, conceptions and concepts regarding an area of professional practice, which are stated in such a way that it is possible for one or more groups of professional practitioners to infer from it tendencies for the execution of their professional roles ".

'Tendencies' are 'globally stated and explicitly reserved predictions about ....' support-relevant, situation-bound phenomena.
A practice theory must have enough truthfulness and its statements must be both valid and relevant for practice.
The difference between practice theory and testable/tested theory is, that the first is prediction-directed, whereas the latter is rule-directed. (truth versus mastery)

2.2. *The research questions*

In view of the stated goals, the following central questions were formulated:

a. Do consultants plan their actions along all the relevant action dimensions ? How do they do that ?
b. What activities are done by consultants to support the school and the innovation process ? Can clusters of activities be distinguished ?
c. What activities are done by consultants to support their relationship with a school ? Can clusters of activities be distinguished ?
d. Is it possible to identify mutually different groups of consultants ?
e. What variables within the school innovation support situation can be identified as probable factors causing difference in support actions and activities ?

These questions were specified in a set of coherent research questions.

2.3. *The research design*

In view of the state of affairs in theory development and research about external school support, the research undertaken has a predominantly descriptive and explorative character, and attempts to detect some possible causal relationships.

The theoretical framework was developed deductively; an inductive approach was used to get more and better information about external school innovation support. In that way the deductively described area could be explored more thoroughly.

Therefore the research was planned in two phases:
- explorative case studies
- longitudinal survey

The research reported in this paper is about the case study phase. For financial and research policy reasons, the second phase has not yet started.

After a complex process of deliberation *eight* groups were found willing to be the object of intensive data gathering and research analysis.
Three of them were studied for six months; two were for four months another three of them were studied for two months.
Each case consisted of a primary school, the connected kindergarten and the external consultant of these two schools, who is on the staff of a local or regional school support agency.
Every case was studied by one, well-trained and informed "observer"; thus, the personal relationship between the research staff and a case could stay clear, consistent and confidential.

2.4. *The research techniques*

The techniques were chosen and constructed so, that it should be possible to make accurate qualitative descriptions of every singular support situation (case), whereas more quantitative analyses were possible for reasons of making a comparative analysis in order to identify hypothetical tendencies.
This implied the following data-gathering methods:
interview, questionnaire, observation and free data gathering.
When it was possible, in fact and/or in time, alternative techniques were used for the same research object. In that way some cross-validation of the instruments was possible.

Eleven instruments were developed before the case studies started and were revised during the first months of the case study.

The following overview lists: the instrument (labeled by the first letters of the Dutch name); the type, the object and the subject of the instruments.

NAME	*TYPE*	*OBJECT*	*SUBJECT*
OBBA	observation	activities	'observer' in meetings
EBAL	questionnaire	activities	primary school
EBAK	questionnaire	activities	kindergarten
IBAB	interview	actions	consultant

IREL	interview	relationship	primary school
IREK	interview	relationship	kindergarten
IREB	interview	relationship	consultant
EDOL	questionnaire	ed.philosophy	primary school
EDOK	questionnaire	ed.philosophy	kindergarten
EDOB	questionnaire	ed.philosophy	consultant
ESOK	questionnaire	organiz. climate	prim.school + kindergarten

The ESOK-instrument for measuring school organizational climate was developed and analyzed on a much greater sample of schools than the eight case school tandems.

2.5. *The research output*

The case study data were analyzed and reported on two levels:

- *intra-case level:* all gathered information, both systematic and free, was used to make a coherent description of every single school support situation. These case reports were written so that feedback to the situations was possible. (eight case reports)
- *inter-case level:* all usable information gathered was analyzed to compare situations and to discover tendencies and to generate hypotheses with respect to both support and to its possible causing factors.
  (two data reports)
  The last chapter of this paper (Elaborated Research Results) summarizes the results of this analysis/output level.

3. A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL INNOVATION SUPPORT

3.1. *The basic dimensions*

For the purpose of the research a theoretical framework was developed, including the mutually related central dimensions of school innovation directed support.

The following dimensions were identified:

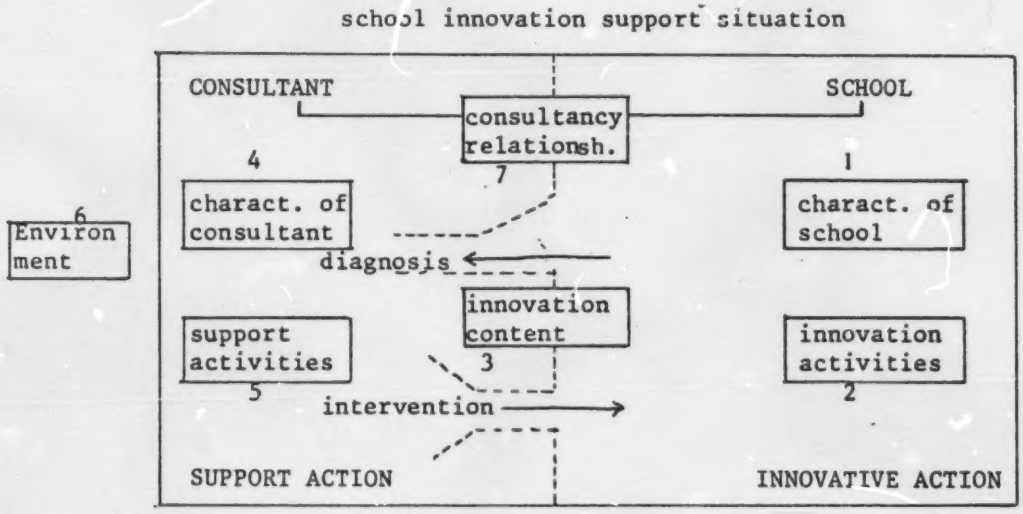
A. School dimensions:
   1. the school as a pedagogic-didactic organization
   2. the innovation the school is occupied with
   3. the innovation activities of the school

B. Consultant dimensions:
   4. the consultant as support giver to school innovation
   5. support activities of the consultant as diagnosis and intervention

C. Environment dimension:
   6. the environment of the innovation support situation

D. Relational dimension:
   7. the consultancy relation between consultant and school

These dimensions can be shown schematically as follows:



3.2. *The support action and activities of the consultant*

These actions and activities are the heart of the theoretical framework. Their structure will be demonstrated along the several distinctions which were made.

a. Actions versus Activities
Partially before but mainly during the research it became clear

that a distinction was to be made between *support as total, planned, coherent and intentional action* on the one hand, and *support in the form of more or less isolated, not imbedded and undirected activities.*
School innovation support as meaningful, interactive, human doing should also be studied on the action level, and not only on the activity level.
The *action level* is appointed by interviewing the consultants on the strategic aspects of their innovation support.
The *activity level* is studied and analyzed by interviewing and questioning the teachers and by observing all relevant consultancy meetings.

b. Consulting versus Conditioning

Consultants will, by nature of their profession, focus their actions and activities on the school, especially the innovation and the innovation process. But this support work can only be done by virtue of a suitable relationship between consultant and school (consultancy relationship). This is the very natural reason why consultants also have to pay attention to that relationship, being a necessary condition for school support. The school-focused support is labeled as *'consulting'*; the relationship-focused support is called *'conditioning'*.

> *FOR PRACTICAL REASONS WE LABEL THE SUPPORT AGENT AS* CONSULTANT; *THE OFFICIAL SUPPORT INSTITUTION IS CALLED* SUPPORT AGENCY;

Both support focuses can be analyzed on the action level as well as on the activity level; in point of fact, we did it only on the activity level (in longer runs; in meetings).
There is always a remainder of uncategorizable 'other support activities'.

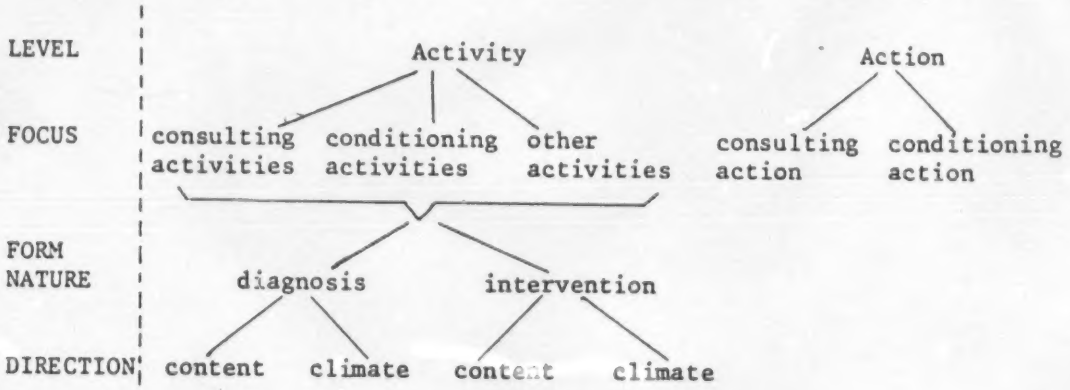
c. Diagnosis versus Intervention

In the framework we have already distinguished between diagnostic and intervention activities, as dynamics of a kind of cyclical process within the relation between consultant and school. They can both be seen as stages in a global support strategy or process, and as repeatedly returning activity forms within an ongoing support process.
In the research done, they are viewed in the latter way, especially with respect to the analysis of consultancy meetings.
Diagnosis is interpreted as 'information gathering' and intervention as 'information giving'; where 'information' is to be understood in a broader sense.

d. Content-directed versus Climate-directed

Both in the school-focused and in the relationship-focused activities the consultant can be concerned with the focal object (*content*). In the school, for instance, to the ability grouping in early mathematics, or to better regulations to optimize the information flow in a school team; in the relationship, for instance, to the making of a clear task division between consultant and school, or to the schedule of meetings.
The consultant can also be concerned with the atmosphere, progress and supervision of the content-directed activities in the school and the support relationship (*climate/process*).
This distinction was also made in analyzing the consultancy meetings.

The following scheme may be of help to fix the distinctions made.



Action level data

The data for this level were gathered by interviewing the consultant on his strategic ideas, plans and experiences. Also data from 'free data gathering' were used.
A sophisticated process of grouping and combining data delivered nine central variables relevant for the action (strategic) level of school innovation support.

Activity level data

Activities in consultancy meetings

This analysis was directly based on the structure explained above in the theoretical framework.
The following analysis frame was used:

consulting:
- content-directed diagnostic act
- climate-directed diagnostic act
- content-directed intervention act
- climate-directed intervention act
- other activities

conditioning: (the same 5 categories)

Activities in a longer run

Data for this analysis level were taken from questionnaire responses of the teachers.
A principal component analysis on this data delivered an interpretable eight factor structure:

1. Support of the deliberation and decision-making in the schools;
2. Support of the execution of the innovation and support program;
3. Preparation and programming of the innovation process;
4. Directiveness with regard to the development of an innovation;
5. Judging the possibilities to realize a particular innovation;
6. Judging the congruence between the goals and intermediate goals on the one hand, and between goals and effects of an innovation on the other hand;
7. 'Plannedness' of the activities undertaken by the consultant;
8. Activities with regard to the concrete implementation of an innovation.

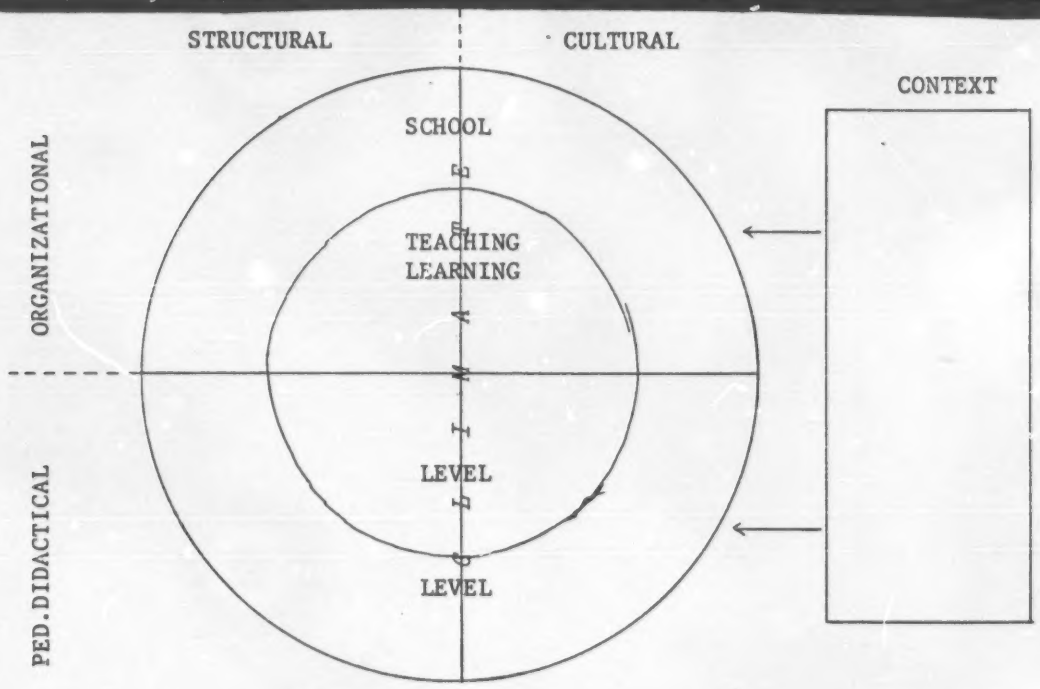
The three groups of elaborated variables and their scores were used to explore the support work of consultants of school innovation situations; each group (level) isolated, and the groups (levels) combined.
Thus we were able to identify:
- clusters of coherent support activities and actions
- groups of rather similar and comparable consultants

3.3. *The characteristics of the school*

In this research a school is seen as the smallest relative independent unit of educational innovation. Support action and activity will be directed to schools and their change processes.
Schools are planned and institutionalized organizations to realize goals of learning and development, and where pupils, parents (in primary and secondary education), teachers and authorities are necessary groups of participants. Of these differentiated participating groups, pupils and teachers are the creators of daily school reality.
In our research we gathered information both when the activities of consultants were directed to the whole team, and when they were directed to a smaller group out of the team.

Schools can also be analyzed as social systems. Within the school as social system we make two distinctions.
The first distinguishes between the *organizational* subsystem and the *pedagogic-didactical* subsystem.
Although the pedagogic-didactic functioning and processes are most important, they are dependent upon the organizational arrangements and structure of that school. An adequate school organization is a prerequisite for coherent and effective education in a school.
A second distinction can be made between the *culture* and the *structure* of a school. The extent of normative consensus, consistency, complementarity and congruence in respect of values, norms and expectations are cultural characteristics of a school as a social system.
The structural characteristics are the constituting system aspects and arrangements of a school as a social system.
The *climate* of a school is viewed as a conceptual link between the structural and the cultural elements of the school.
Within the school as a social system, two levels can be distinguished: the *school situation level* and the *teaching-learning situation level*.
The school as a social system is seen as more or less influenced by external *context variables*, which are partly changeable by the school or the school support agency.

This social system analytic model of a school can be shown schematically as follows:



All the distinguished school variables are *factual conditions* or influences for innovation processes in a school; they are a *potential focus* or object of innovation and/or support action and activities.

Two of the school variables as *conditions for innovation and support* were studied in this research:

a. organizational school climate, and
b. the school's conception about primary education in general and the New Basic School development in particular.

The conceptual data were gathered from questionnaire responses by the teachers. No significant difference between schools was found.
The organizational climate data were also gathered by means of a specially developed questionnaire.
Principal components analysis on this data presented the following interpretable data structure:

1. the style of school leadership, concentrated on the degree of concern of the teachers for the school;
2. interpersonal relations between the teachers, both on the professional and the personal level;
3. team functioning, especially the openness of the team;
4. school leadership, focused on watchfulness, steering and control;
5. solidarity among teachers;
6. rules and procedures with respect to decision making and deliberation.

School variables as a *focus of innovation and support* were also studied; teachers and consultants were questioned on different levels (strategic, longer run, meetings) on what objects innovative and support work was really focused. Because of the specific context of the global innovation - the development of an integrated New Basic School for 4 to 12-year-old children - the particular innovations are partly characterized by that greater innovative context.

The *material* aspects of this structure-breaking innovation imply two relevant dynamics for the innovation process:
- during the process the existing situation will change continuously in the direction of the desired future situation;
- the image of the future situation can change and becomes more accurate to the extent that the innovation process in the school makes progress.

The *formal* aspects of this innovation in primary education are:
- directed to an integration of two levels of education and schooling;
- nationwide coverage;
- multifactorial complexity;
- school level-bound locus;
- as a focal option the functional development of a 'school working plan' and concomitant teaching-learning activities.

3.4. *Characteristics of the innovation activities of a school*

The innovation activities of New Basic School directed schools are viewed as parts of a more or less explicit *innovation process with a problem solving feature*. This agrees with the governmental policy: every tandem of kindergarten and primary school, starting from its own realities and ending in its own realized possibilities (including external support).
In most global terms - and in that way excluding other known innovation process orientations - the planned innovation process in a school, from the action point of view, can be described by the following dimensions/stages: notion forming - goal setting - programming - execution - evaluation.
(As is stated later on, the action point of view of *school innovation support* is structured in the same terms.)

3.5. *Characteristics of the consultancy relationship*

The existence of a relationship between consultant and school is a necessary condition for support action.
In this relationship two dimensions are seen as characteristic and determining:
- the structure of the support contacts
- the nature of the interpersonal relations and contacts

In this research this relationship is studied from two different points of view. In the first place as an influencing condition for support action. Secondly as a focus of support action and activities of the consultant (previously labeled as 'conditioning', distinguished from 'consulting').

3.6. *Characteristics of the consultant*

In this research these characteristics are divided into two groups:
- characteristics of the *support agency:* innovation policy, support policy, size and experience;
- characteristics of the *consultant:* educational philosophy, support philosophy, support conception, teaching and support experience, professional education and training.

These characteristics are studied as possible conditions and causing factors of support action and activities.

The elaborated data on these important situation variables are brought into relationship with the found support actions and activities (groups and clusters), enabling us to explore the possible causing influence of these variables on the support action and activities of school consultants.

4. ELABORATED RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 SUPPORTING

a. *Support activities in consultancy meetings*

In their activities consultants are more directed to the innovation and the innovation process in the school (consulting), and less to the relationship they maintain with the school for that purpose (conditioning)

During consultancy meetings consultants tend to favor the triad *diagnosis - climate-directed - relation-focused* activities, or the triad *intervention - content-directed - school-focused* activities.

Both in the conditioning and in the consulting activities is found a strong negative correlation between *climate*-directed and *content*-directed intervention activities.

The direction of an activity (content versus climate) is more decisive for the determination of differences between consultant activities than the nature or form of that activity (diagnosis versus intervention).

The *focal* difference between support activities (school versus relationship) is a workable and suitable criterion to determine differences between those activities.

b. *Support activities in a longer run*

In the perception of teachers and schools, consultants can be distinguished to the extent that they are either more active in the implementation of an innovation, or in carrying out the designed innovation and support program. (more *practice-directed* versus more *process-directed*)

The extent to which school consultants are active in the process performance (organizational and innovative) is a clearer distinction between consultants than the extent to which one is either more practice/content-directed or more process-directed in activities.

Because of the relatively high correlation between the factor 'program execution' and the factor 'plannedness' it may be hypothesized that teachers and schools distinguish between consultants to the extent that the latter show planned action for the process performance in school and consultancy, especially as to the execution of deliberation, decision-making and the innovation and support program.

c. *Supporting in terms of action components*

Consultants are to be distinguished with respect to the characteristic feature 'planned support' to the extent that goals are formulated,

a support program has been designed and the support content is flexible in time.

An activity-specified and innovation goal-directed approach of supporting schools is a distinguishing characteristic of school consultants.

Differences in support between relatively homogeneous groups of consultants are manifest, especially in the plannedness and in the extent to which consultants pursue support goals which differ from the innovation goals of the school.

d. *Coherence between the three data levels of support action and activities*

Consultants who give much attention to an objective clear and practicable relationship with the school are perceived by the teachers as strongly concerned with the progress and the feasibility of the innovation process in the school.
Consultants who are more strongly focused on the climate and process of the consultancy relationship are seen by the teachers as less concerned with the progress and the feasibility of the innovation process in the school.

Consultants who are perceived by teachers as directive with regard to the development of an innovation in the school during consultancy meetings, do more intervening activities with respect to the *content* aspect of the innovation and the consultancy relationship.

Consultants who perceive themselves as giving less attention to goal-directed preparation and planning of their action, create the impression in teachers of paying more attention to the innovation goals of the school.
There is probably a negative relationship between the innovation goal-directedness of consultants on the one hand and the attention they give to the planning and preparation of their support on the other hand.

Consultants who perceive themselves as doing specific clarification activities in the school, in consultancy meetings perform more information-gathering activities on the content of their relationship with the school. Their support goals largely coincide with the innovation goals of the school.

No significant connection was found between the self-perception of support of the consultants and their interpretable school innovation-directed activities in meetings. This was also found with regard to the relationship of these activities in meetings to the teacher-perception of support activities, *except for the clear relationship between teacher-perceived development steering and content-directed interventions in meetings with the school.*

THE COHERENCE BETWEEN OBSERVATION DATA AND PERCEPTION DATA IS EVIDENTLY STRONGER IN CONDITIONING THAN IT IS IN CONSULTING

There is a complete correspondence between the relationship focused intervention activities in meetings and the plannedness directed

activities of consultants in the longer run.
The *content-directed* relationship focused interventions correlate *positively* with these planning activities, whereas the *climate-directed* relationship focused interventions correlate *negatively* with the planning activities.

Consultants who are perceived as 'planned' by teachers, will intervene more frequently on the content side and less frequently on the climate side of their relationship with the school in consultancy meetings.

An overall analysis of the three types of variables of support action and activities yields three distinct groups of consultants.
The first group can be characterized as *relatively less planned but goal interested.*
The second group by comparison can be characterized as *focused on information gathering and goal-directed implementation.*
The third group is characterized by *the almost total absence of concept forming as well as concrete goal statements.*

One group of consultants remains consistent, independent of the nature or the combination of data; they are less process directive on innovation and relationship; they pay little or no attention to the preparation and programming of their support and to deliberation and decision making in the school; they are less 'planned'. They do pay attention to their support goals.

In the perception of the teachers, whether or not in combination with other data, another group of consultants attracts attention. They accentuate preparation and programming of their support and the deliberation and decision making in the school.

e. *Summary and feedback*

The distinction which is made in the theoretical framework of the research, between the school as focus (consulting) and the relationship as focus (conditioning) appears necessary and manageable in identifying differences between support activities. Within the two differently focused activities the school-focused consulting activities predominate.
The distinction between diagnostic and intervention activities appears to be manageable, provided that it is interpreted as information gathering as opposed to information giving.
Applied to making distinctions between support activities, this distinction is not unworkable; however the difference in direction of the activities (content versus climate/process) is much more decisive for the determination of these differences.

Where the activities of consultants in consultancy meetings are concerned, three groups of consultants are to be identified. The extent to which they intervene on climate aspects of school and relationship is the most discriminating criterion between the three groups. There is an apparent tendency to the triad diagnosis - relationship-focused - climate-directed on the one hand and the triad intervention - school-focused - content-directed on the other hand. This tendency is supported by the strong negative correlation which is found between climate-directed and content-directed support activities;

both within consulting and conditioning.
The probably specific character of climate-directed diagnostic activities, independent of their focus, does not concur with this tendency.

In the experience and contact-based perception of teachers and schools the activities of consultants can be divided into two groups:
one group of activities on the concrete implementation of an innovation and another, different group of activities to execute the designed innovation and support program.
Teacher and school perception data give rise to a three-group clustering of consultants.
Consultants are not so much to be distinguished as to whether they give more attention to content and practice implementation, or are more interested in the organizational or innovative process. The extent to which they show planned activity on process implementation in school, and on innovation and support, is the most important criterion to make a distinction between groups of consultants, as seen by teachers and schools.

Where the self-perception of consultants of their support is concerned, it is striking that the 'plannedness' of actions differ among consultants but is not totally absent in any consultant.
The differences, in this point, lie in the extent of specificity of planning and planned activities and in the goal-directedness of the activities; especially when the goal direction of support differs from the innovation goals of the school.
Together with the already mentioned plannedness, they are the two most important criteria for distinguishing between consultant groups in respect of their self-perceived support action.

Consultants who are perceived by teachers as 'planned' in consultancy meetings will intervene more frequently on the objective side of their relationship with the school. They are also more concerned about the progress and realizability of the process of innovation in the school. They are viewed as steering the innovation development.
Consultants who see themselves as giving much attention to preparation and programming of their own action, impress teachers as paying less attention to the innovation goals of the school.
This structure of results may indicate that 'plannedness' in support of consultants is seen as resulting from attention to explicitness and progress of the innovation process; and not so much through attention to the innovation goals.
This corresponds with the former finding that groups of consultants, in the perception of teachers, are to be distinguished on the planned character of their activities to process execution in school, innovation and support.
When the characteristics of thenearly constant, data independent, consultant groups are involved in these findings, it is striking that 'plannedness' and execution-process-directedness return as the most important distinguishing variables.

4.2. CAUSAL FACTORS

a. *Focus as possible causing factor*

School focuses and action components

All along the line it can be stated that consultants act in a different way with respect to the same school focuses, so that there is no question of influence of focus upon action.
On the other hand it is striking that the same consultant does not act in the same way to different school focuses.

School focuses and support activities

There is an interplay between school focuses and support activities; but a dominant influence of the one on the other (or vice versa) cannot be systematically be demonstrated.

There is some reason to assume that an active directive approach of consultants is connected with attention to general, school level topics, whereas a more receptive and adaptive approach is more connected with attention to concrete subjects, particularly within teaching-learning situations.

Differences in concrete support focus (school versus teaching-learning situation; organizational versus pedagogic-didactical; school aspects versus relation aspects) especially influence the extent to which consultants perform climate and process-directed activities during consultancy meetings.

Relationship focuses and action components / support activities

Generally speaking it cannot be stated that relationship focuses have a determining influence on the activities of the consultant. It is indeed striking that more systematic and planned working consultants spend more time on mutual evaluation, reflection and feedback of school and consultant.

b. *Locus as possible causing factor*

Consultants who work with small groups of the team of a school are, regarding their role and position, strongly connected with the progress of the innovation. Working with the whole school team is much less innovation-connected; for the consultant is then working more explicitly by virtue of her/his role and position as these are formally agreed upon.

c. *Relationship as possible causing factor*

Content-directed diagnostic activities of the consultant, with regard to frequency and spent time, are narrowly related with the openness of the consultancy relationship and the influence in it of the consultant on what happens during the innovation.

d. *School as possible causing factor*

Aspects of the principal's leadership influence the activities of consultants insofar as the consultant performs some activities, or doesn't, or performs them in another way, because the principal performs certain activities.

Principals who intensively watch, direct and control the daily process in the school are looked upon by consultants as persons who will do the same in respect of the innovation process; in these situations consultants spend less time and attention on innovation process-directed interventions.

Friendly relations within a school team invite a consultant to pay more attention to the content side of the school and the innovation, and, specifically, to become more active on behalf of her/his own understandig of the school. In those cases the relationship is given much less attention.

More solidarity within a school team obviously has an excluding and question-raising effect on the consultant; in these cases he/she tends to look for information on the non-objective aspects in the total innovation support situation.

Solidarity and friendliness, being organizational climate characteristics of a school, have opposite influences on the activities of the consultant during consultancy meetings: *solidarity* especially evokes climate-directed consulting and conditioning activities whereas *friendliness* predominantly evokes content-directed consulting activities only.

e. *Consultant as possible causing factor*

The school support agency, as the institutional background of the consultant, has little or no influence on the concrete activities of consultants in schools.

School consultants who base their activities mainly on their own, reflected, teaching experience in their support of schools are less removed from the concrete realization, and are therefore less able to help schools learn to continuously improve the organization and execution their own innovation attempts.

School consultants who attribute teachers and children , respectively, a *guiding/supporting* role and an *independent* position, manifest much less intervening behavior.
Consultants who attribute teachers and children, respectively, a *leading/determining* role and a *dependent* position, manifest much more intervening behavior.

There is an explicit congruence between the consultant's conception of the teacher-pupil relationship and the nature of the actions and activities of the consultant in contact with the school.

The more consultants work on preparing and developing innovation, the more teachers perceive the extent of support as great;

the more consultants work on implementing innovation, the less they are viewed as supporting by the directly involved persons.
Perhaps teachers have greater difficulty in the development and planned approach of an innovation, than in the implementation of a (developed) innovation. Assistance to preparation and development is experienced more as support than assistence to the implementation.

f. *Summary of the most important results*

In the underlying theoretical framework of this research, characteristic aspects of the consultant, of the innovation, of the relationship, of the school and of the innovation process are identified as relevant variables, minimally as linked up with and maximally as causing factors for support by school consultants.
The research and data analysis resulted in many interpretable and meaningful connections; however, the direction in some of these connections was unclear or uninterpretable to such a degree, that a causal relationship could not be inferred from these links.
The latter was the case with the school and relationship focuses.

The difference between active, steering consultants and receptive, following consultants, in connection with school level is reasonable, but it stays unclear that the level difference in support focus would account for the different support approaches of consultants.
More explanatory is the influence of the nature of the support focus on the extent to which the consultant gathers objective information about relationship or school.
The relationship as such accounts more for support activities than the relationship as a conditioning focus.

Aspects of school leadership as well as the qualities of a school team appear to be two organizational climate variables of the school which have both explicit and different influences on the activities of the consultant; especially with regard to more climate or more content-directedness.

Our finding the the school support agency has almost no influence on any of the doings of its consultants in schools is very remarkable.
The level of schooling and training appears to be of influence.
Very notable is the congruence found between the consultant's conception of the teacher-pupil relationship on the one hand and his/her own actions in relation with the school on the other hand.